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Big River pollution linked to mine site

Another mining operation is apparently leaking pollutants into the Big River according to an investigation being conducted by officials of the Missouri Conservation Commission.

The site of the leak is at the Dresser Minerals Number 10 Mine on the Jefferson-St. Francois county line. The site is a barite mining facility that has been in operation for a little more than five years.

Dr. James Whitley of the Conservation Department staff said today the leak was showing up in a spring about a quarter mile upstream from the mining operation. It is going under a hill and into another valley. Then it is coming up through a spring at the edge of the river. Whitley said of the waste from the mining operation.

There is little doubt, according to Whitley, that the red waste is coming from the mining operation. The river is very red at the site of the spring. The coloration of the river starts to diminish somewhat as the water flows downstream but it is turbid some 25 miles downstream, Whitley added.

Officials say that stopping the flow may be a major problem for the mining company. It could be anywhere. If it is at the top of the settlement pond then that

might not be too bad but if it should happen to be at the bottom then we have a major problem on our hands. That is a very large settlement pond, Whitley added.

The spill was reported last Friday by a canoeist who was making his way through the area. Officials spent most of the weekend checking out the problem.

The first reports say that a quart of water caught from the spring and allowed to settle for 20 minutes will have as much as an inch of settlement in the bottom of the jar.

Whitley said he had not seen the test results but said he would not doubt that the test would show that much flow. He flew over the area last weekend and spotted the flow and then traced the flow downstream.

This is the same barite operation that had drawn fire from local officials when the company constructed a bridge and a dam across the river. The dam and the road are still in use by the company. There is a flow to allow the water in the river to go through the area.

It was also a Dresser dam that broke in 1975 sending tons of the red settlement pouring into Big River via Mill Creek. Officials say that the river had just made a recovery from that major spill.

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Spill

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It seems like Big River is one of streams that has major problems of this type, Whitley said this morning as he pointed to the flow of sludge that continues to go into the river near the old dam at the county landfill site.

Whitley explained that the new spill at Dresser is of a type often found in the Ozarks. There are many springs in the area that have their sources many miles away. This is just an example of the kind of problem which has developed in the past, Whitley added.

At this point no one is really sure what can be done. The matter has been turned over to the Clean Water Commission. Whitley says he thinks the company wants to solve the problem but just how to do it is still a question.

Court: NPPD may build power line over reservation

ST LOUIS — The 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Thursday affirmed a lower court's refusal to prevent Nebraska

Public Power District from constructing a power line across the Winnebago Indian Reservation in northeast Nebraska.

The ruling clears the way for the construction of the 345,000-volt power line from an Iowa generating plant across the Missouri River and through the reservation.

Michael Gooch of Omaha, attorney for the Winnebago Tribe, was not available for comment, but tribal spokesman Scott Raymond said a meeting would be held at Winnebago Thursday night to discuss further legal action.

NPPD attorney James DeMars of Lincoln, who said he had not seen the court's opinion, said construction could begin this summer. The power line had been expected to be operative by this summer, he said.

The line would run above ground from the Neal generation station in northwest Iowa to an NPPD station between Hoskins and Norfolk in Nebraska.

"The (power) loads have been growing substantially in northeast Nebraska because of irrigation," DeMars said.

The tribe alleged that federal authorities had not adequately assessed the impact of the power line on the Thurston County residents and on a flock of endangered bald eagles.

— *farm*